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ABSTRACT

Eighteen regular education teachers completed a rating scale on their expectations for the behavioral and academic performances of 27 younger siblings of learning disabled (LD) and non-LD students. All teachers previously had taught the Ss' older siblings. Expectation ratings were significantly lower for the siblings of LD Ss in the areas of reading level, general knowledge, visual/auditory perception, and memory skills. These students were also expected to make relatively less progress during the year and to need more support services than children with a non-LD sibling. Study limitations are cited. (Author/CL)

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Research Report No. 29

TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SIBLINGS OF LEARNING DISABLED AND NON-LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS: A PILOT STUDY

Linda Richey, Margaret Potter, and James Ysseldyke

IRLD

Institute for Research on Learning Disabilities

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I. Adequacy of Norm-Referenced Data for Prediction of Success

II. Computer Simulation Research on the Assessment/Decision-making/Intervention Process

III. Comparative Research on Children Labeled LD and Children Failing Academically but not Labeled LD

IV. Surveys on In-the-Field Assessment, Decision Making, and Intervention

V. Ethological Research on Placement Team Decision Making

VI. Bias Following Assessment

VII. Reliability and Validity of Formative Evaluation Procedures

VIII. Data-Utilization Systems in Instructional Programming

Additional information on these research areas may be obtained by writing to the Editor at the Institute.

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May, 1980

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Abstract

Teachers completed a rating scale on their expectations for the behavioral and academic performances of students in their classes. All teachers previously had taught the students' older siblings, some of whom were learning disabled. Expectation ratings were significantly lower for the siblings of learning disabled students in the areas of reading level, general knowledge, visual/auditory perception, and memory skills. These children also were expected to make relatively less progress during the year and to need more support services than children with a non-learning disabled sibling. The suggestion that prior experiences with learning disabled children bias teachers' expectations for the younger siblings of these children is considered tentative in the light of several limitations.

Teachers' Expectations for the Siblings of Learning Disabled and Non-Learning Disabled Students: A Pilot Study

Previous research has suggested that special education categories (e.g., mental retardation, emotional disturbance, learning disabilities) serve as labels and subsequently have significant impact on teacher expectations and teacher-child interactions. However, from extensive reviews of the effects of labels (MacMillan, Jones, & Aloia, 1974; Ysseldyke & Thurlow, 1978), it can be concluded that the state of the art with reference to the effects of labeling children is, at best, equivocal.

Teachers' expectations for other children may be derived from these sources as well. For example, Seaver (1973) suggested that expectancies may be a function of teachers' previous experiences with the children's older siblings:

> The tendency should be for the teacher to expect the younger sibling to be more like his [or her] older sibling than he [or she] actually is. Further, the direction and range of expectancies should be as great as that of actual experiences with pupils. Poor students should induce teachers to expect dullness in their younger siblings; discipline problems should induce teachers to expect the worst sort of behavior from their younger siblings; and brilliant pupils should lead their teachers to expect the same top performance of their siblings. (Seaver, 1973, p. 335)

Seaver looked at expectancy effects by examining the first-grade achievement scores of children who had been preceded in school by "bright" or "dull" older siblings. He hypothesized, and found, that when the older siblings had been good students, the younger siblings performed better when taught by the same teacher than when taught by a different teacher;

when the older siblings had been poor students, the younger siblings performed worse when taught by the same teacher than when taught by a different teacher.

However, in Seaver's study, the effects due to individual teachers were not analyzed; therefore, it is not clear whether any of the teachers had both a younger sibling whose older sibling they had taught and a younger sibling whose older sibling they had not taught.

While Seaver's results provide interesting data, they do not directly speak to the issue of the learning disabilities (LD) label and the expectancy effects it might create. The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which having an older sibling identified as learning disabled alters a teacher's expectations for non-learning disabled younger siblings. In addition, the study attempted to clarify some of the methodological problems present in Seaver's study.

Method

Subjects

Direct subjects were 18 regular education teachers, teaching in grades K through 5. The 3 male and 15 female subjects were selected from four school districts in Minnesota. Average years of teaching experience was 15.2, with experience ranging from 8 to 28 years. (See Table 1 for a complete description of subjects.) Three of the teachers had some special education training, while 15 stated that they did not have such experience.

Insert Table 1 about here

Participating teachers evaluated 27 younger siblings, 11 boys and 16 girls. Sixteen of the children were younger siblings of learning disabled students, while 11 had non-learning disabled older siblings. (See Table 1 for information on grade levels.)

All participating teachers had previously taught an older sibling of a non-learning disabled (non-LD) student currently in their classroom. In some cases this older sibling was LD and in some cases the older sibling was non-LD. Subject identification and selection were supervised by Institute personnel in some districts; other districts preferred to identify subjects using their own personnel and resources.

Materials

A rating scale was developed to obtain information on the teachers' expectancies for the behavioral and academic performances of the students now in their classes (see Appendix A for the Teacher Prediction Scales). Scale items were constructed using a five-point Likert system; a rating of 1 indicated poor or deficient performance, while a rating of 5 signified excellent or superior performance. In addition, an Interview Form was used to obtain general information on the teacher (see Appendix B for the Teacher Interview). The Teacher Interview also provided information concerning the teacher's opinion as to the major cause of learning disabilities and the extent to which learning disabled children are able to learn as well as their "normal" peers when given appropriate support services. Information concerning other family members who may have been taught previously by the teacher was obtained during the interview as well.

Procedures

Learning disabled (LD) students who received services during 1976, 1977, and/or 1978 school years were identified in each participating

school district (see Appendix C for identification and selection procedures). Students who met LD placement criteria for the study were identified, and lists of these children and their teachers were prepared. The names of the LD older siblings and their regular education teachers for 1976, 1977, and 1978 were then placed on the Teacher Assignment Form (see Appendix D). Names of younger siblings and their present classroom teacher were next added to the list. Teachers whose names appeared for both the LD student and the non-LD sibling were selected as potential subjects for the study. Sibling pairs of non-LD older/non-LD younger students were identified by a similar procedure. Appendix D contains all additional forms used for subject selection.

Teachers having both an LD older/non-LD younger sibling pair and a non-LD/non-LD sibling pair were to be included in the study; however, a sufficient number of teachers having both pairs was not located. Consequently, teachers having at least one sibling pair were included.

Data Collection

Data collection was planned for the first week of the fall semester in order to obtain information from teachers prior to their actually having had classroom experiences with the younger siblings. The data collection process encompassed a period from early October, 1979 through the first week in January, 1980.

Participating teachers were asked to complete a rating scale on their expectations for behavioral and academic performances of the younger siblings who were currently in their classes. Additional general information concerning both the student and teacher was collected following completion of the rating scale; both the prediction scales and the teacher interview were administered by a research assistant who had been

trained in administration procedures. A description of procedures for administering both the rating scale and teacher interview are included in Appendix E. Total time required for this procedure was approximately 20 minutes.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this investigation was to ascertain the extent to which teacher experiences with learning disabled children bias their expectations for incoming younger siblings of the LD child. In order to test this research question, teachers were asked to predict the performance of actual siblings of both LD and non-LD children (see Appendix A for specific prediction questions). Scores on the Likert-type rating scale were summed in order to obtain a mean rating for each item on the prediction instrument. The extent to which teachers' responses to this dependent measure were internally consistent (i.e., reliable) was investigated using coefficient alpha. The resulting coefficient adjusted for the number of items in the scale resulted in a reliability of $r = .89$.

It was not possible to find the desired number of subjects having both an LD older/non-LD younger sibling pair and a non-LD older/non-LD younger sibling pair. Therefore, subjects were included who had only one sibling pair or who had more than one pair of each type. Because of the varying numbers and types of student pairs per teacher, many of the basic assumptions of traditional statistics could not be met. With these considerations in mind, a one-way analysis of variance was run to get an indication of any differences in expectations for students with non-learning disabled siblings and students who had a learning disabled sibling.

Results

Results of the analysis of the Teacher Prediction Scales are presented in Table 2. Differences were observed between the two groups for six of the scale items and for the scale total. Areas in which the student with a learning disabled sibling was expected to do relatively less well were: reading level, general knowledge, visual and/or auditory perception, and memory skills. Children who had an older learning disabled sibling were also expected to make relatively less progress during the year and to need more support services than children with a non-learning disabled sibling.

Insert Table 2 about here

Teachers were also asked to indicate what they thought was the major cause of learning disability; the majority of teachers (72%) stated that environmental causes were most important, 21 percent indicated that heredity was the major cause, 7 percent identified medical reasons as the primary cause; no one listed "other" as being most important. When asked the extent to which they thought learning disabled children, if given support services, could learn about as well as their normal peers, eight teachers disagreed with the statement, five were not sure, and four agreed. None of the teachers either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Conclusions

This study was conducted to ascertain the efficacy of investigating further the extent to which prior experiences with learning disabled

children bias teachers' expectations for the younger siblings of these children. Significant differences were found between expectations for younger siblings of LD children ($\bar{X}$ = 3.3) when compared to expectations held for younger siblings of non-LD children ($\bar{X}$ = 3.8) on overall test scores. In other words, teachers held lower expectations for the younger siblings of LD children. Specifically, expectations for reading level, general knowledge, visual/auditory perception, and memory skills were significantly lower for LD siblings. Teachers also indicated that LD siblings would make less progress during a school year, and would require more support services. However, because of several limitations, the study's results must be considered tentative at present.

Limitations

Several methodological issues regarding expectancy research must be dealt with in the context of limitations. First, care should be taken in the measurement of expectancy effects so that biases are not introduced into the results of the study. In the present study, at least half of the participating teachers were aware of the nature of the study prior to data collection. Although the extent to which such prior knowledge acted as a biasing factor in this research remains a matter of speculation, such an occurrence does represent a serious departure from accepted methods (Dawes, 1972).

All data for this study were to have been collected in the first week of the fall term; however, teachers participated at various times between October, 1979 and January, 1980. Thus, each teacher's actual classroom experiences with the younger sibling varied in length of time. The extent to which those experiences altered any initial biases that

might have existed at the beginning of the year cannot be determined. Previous research, however, has shown that initial perceptions of children are altered with time and classroom experience (Finn, 1972; Reschly & Lamprecht, 1979).

A within-subjects analysis of variance had been planned for this research; however, several comparative pairs of children were lost through normal attrition. Consequently, all teachers did not have matched pairs of LD and non-LD children to evaluate, and some had as many as three pairs. With those conditions taken into consideration, a between-subjects analysis of variance was performed for both the total scale and for each scale item separately. Results of those analyses should be considered with additional caution because of problems of interdependence between LD and non-LD groups and inequalities of the numbers per group.

Recommendations for Future Research

Taking all limitations into consideration, these results indicate a need for further investigation using more stringent methods. Recommendations include that variation in the ages of the older siblings be reduced in order to provide a more homogeneous target population. Differences which might be due to sex distribution in LD classes and expectancies induced by prior experience with other older family members should be controlled for in subsequent research. It is also suggested that methods be redesigned so that information may be obtained at the close of the current school term. Data collection in May, asking teachers to predict performance for the following school year, would be free of contamination caused by actual classroom experiences with younger siblings.

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Table 1

Demographic Information Concerning Direct and Indirect Subjects

Direct Subjects (Teachers)

Males 3 Females 15 Total 18

Range of Grades Taught - K to 5

Range of Years' Experience - 8 to 28 ($\bar{X}$ = 15.2)

Special Education Training Yes 3 No 15

Indirect Subjects (Children)

Males 11 Females 16 Total 27

LD Pairs 16 Non-LD Pairs 11

Grade Levels - K = 3 1 = 4 2 = 5 3 = 8

4 = 5 5 = 2 ($\bar{X}$ = 3.5)

Table 2

Mean Responses on Rating Scale Items for

Siblings of LD and Non-LD Students

Item	Learning Disabled	Non-Learning Disabled
1. Reading Level	2.8	3.8
2. Reading Comprehension	3.0	3.6
3. Spelling Achievement	3.0	3.2
4. Math Achievement	3.1	3.6
5. * General Knowledge	2.9	4.2
6. * Visual and/or auditory perception	3.4	4.2
7. * Memory skills	2.8	4.0
8. Fine and/or gross motor performance	3.6	3.8
9. Attending behaviors	3.1	3.6
10. Assignments completed	3.7	4.0
11. Relationships with other students	3.8	4.1
12. Self-concept	3.6	3.7
13. Disturbingness of classroom behaviors	4.4	4.4
14. * Expected progress	3.5	4.4
15. * Need for support services	3.4	4.6
* Total Test	3.3	3.8

* $p < .05$

NOTE: Mean ratings are based on a five-point Likert Scale with 1 equal to deficient or poor performance and 5 representing superior performance.

Appendix A

Teacher Prediction Scales

Directions to teachers: Circle the number that best describes your predictions for this child's school performance in each of the following areas at the end of the current year.

		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Reading level	deficient (poor)		not sure		superior (excellent)
2.	Reading comprehension	deficient		not sure		superior
3.	Spelling achievement	deficient		not sure		superior
4.	Math achievement	deficient		not sure		superior
5.	General knowledge	deficient		not sure		superior
6.	Visual and/or auditory perception	deficient		not sure		superior
7.	Memory skills	deficient		not sure		superior
8.	Fine and/or gross motor performance	deficient		not sure		superior
9.	Attending behaviors (attention span)	deficient		not sure		superior
10.	Assignments completed	seldom		not sure		almost always
11.	Relationships with other students	poor		not sure		excellent
12.	Self-concept	very negative		not sure		very positive
13.	Classroom behaviors of this child might	disturb me a lot		not sure		disturb me very little
14.	How much progress might you expect this child to make during the year?	almost none	some	not sure	average	excellent
15.	Additional needs of this child might include:	special class placement	some support services	not sure	little support services	no special services

Appendix B

Teacher Interview

Sex of teacher: _____ Male _____ Female

Grade level taught:_____

Years experience:_____

Special education training _____ Yes _____ No

What do you think is the major cause of LD?

Medical_____ Environmental_____ Hereditary_____

Other_____

Given appropriate support services LD children learn as well as "normal" children.

_____ disagree strongly

_____ disagree

_____ not sure

_____ agree

_____ agree strongly

Have you taught any other members of this student's family? Yes____ No____

If yes, list below and indicate any special services the child was receiving at the time he/she was in your class (e.g., none, MR, LD, ED, SLBP, PH, visually handicapped, speech and hearing, physical therapy, counseling, etc.).

Name	When Taught	Special Services

VI-A
9/79
Form 7

Appendix C

VIA - SUBJECT IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION

STEP	PROCEDURE	FORM	PERSON
1	List name and school of all elementary age learning disabled (LD) students who received services during 1976, 1977, and 1978. Students may be identified by name or code numbers.	3	School or IRLD
2	Select students who meet eligibility requirements for the study from the above list.		IRLD
3	Identify (from those selected in Step 2) all LD students who have a younger non-learning disabled (NLD) sibling.	4	School or IRLD
4	List the LD students' teachers for 1976, 1977, and 1978 and the younger sibling's teacher for the 1979-80 school year.	4	
5	Select LD older/non-LD younger (LD/NLD) sibling pairs who have at least one teacher in common (i.e., younger sibling who is now assigned to a teacher who taught the LD older sibling).		IRLD
6	Examine class lists of the teachers identified in Step 5 in order to locate children now assigned to these teachers who have older siblings. List those NLD/NLD sibling pairs who are now and have been assigned to these teachers.	5	School or IRLD
7	Parent permission forms distributed to parents of students for whom teachers will complete questionnaires.	1	School or IRLD
8	Teacher permission forms obtained from subjects whose siblings pairs have the required parent consent.	2	School or IRLD
DATA COLLECTION			
	Each teacher completes the prediction rating scale on the siblings presently assigned to his/her class. Then a general information survey will be administered by IRLD staff or school designee.	6	IRLD

Appendix D

DISTRICT_____
CONTACT_____
PHONE_____

CHILDREN RECEIVING SERVICES FOR
LEARNING DISABILITIES

NAME	SCHOOL	DATE ASSIGNED	DATE TERMINATED

VI-A
8/79
Form 3

SCHOOL _____
CONTACT _____
PHONE _____

TEACHER ASSIGNMENT FORM

of L.D. Child	Homeroom Teachers 1978	1977	1976	Name of Sibling	Homeroom Teac 1979

VI-A
8/79
Form 4

Teacher _____

SCHOOL _____
CONTACT _____
PHONE _____

TEACHER ASSIGNMENT FORM
Non-L.D.

Name of Child	Older Non-L.D. (Sibling Taught) No	Yes	If yes, Name	Year Taught

Appendix E

Study VI-A

Administration of Teacher Prediction Scale

and Teacher Interview

1. Know name of teacher and names of students teacher is to rate.

2. Contact each teacher and set up a time ( ) when the scale may be administered.

3. For each teacher have one copy of the Prediction Scales and one copy of the Teacher Interview for each child the teacher is to rate.

4. Remind the teacher that this information is being collected for research purposes only; it will be held strictly confidential, and will in no way affect the child or his educational program.

5. Hand the teacher the "Teacher Prediction Scales" with the following statement:

"This inventory is designed to measure predicted school performance of children in regular elementary classrooms._____ is the child for which I would like you to fill out this form. Answer each item on the scale by circling the number that best describes your predictions for _____'s performance in each area at the end of the year. Try to avoid the use of #3 (not sure) whenever possible."

If more than one child per teacher:

"Now I would like you to do the same thing for _____. Remember, circle the number that best describes your predictions for _____'s performance in each area at the end of the year."

6. After the teacher has filled out the Prediction Scale for each child, say "I would like to ask you just a few additional questions"; then fill out a Teacher Interview form for each child (be sure the Interview Form is coded to match the child's Prediction scale).

7. Thank the teacher for his/her cooperation and ask them not to discuss the nature of content of this study with any other teachers since we will be asking other teachers to participate in this study both this fall and possibly next spring.

Study VI. Notes to keep in mind.

1. The study is being conducted by the College of Education at the University of Minnesota.

2. Designed to inventory common characteristics of samples of children in typical elementary classrooms.

3. Inventory is designed for research purposes only and will be kept completely confidential.

4. Children were chosen by the school to meet certain qualifications set by the researchers. The children from this group who are actually being rated are those whose parents agreed to participate in this study.

5. We are having a sample of teachers in this district and other districts participate in this study.

6. Ask teacher not to discuss this study with any other teachers.

PUBLICATIONS

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